

Abstract 339

TITLE: Childhood Sexual Abuse and Sexual Risk Practices Among Men at High Risk for HIV Infection

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: There is some research evidence to suggest that men who are sexually abused as children are more likely than nonabused men to engage in sexual practices which place them at risk for contracting HIV. The purpose of this study was to further explore this issue by examining the consequences of childhood sexual abuse on risky sexual practices, substance use, and use of mental health services among a sample of predominantly heterosexual men.

METHODS: The study was part of a large multisite trial to test the efficacy of an HIV prevention intervention in reducing risky sexual practices among adults at high risk for contracting HIV. Data analyzed for the study were obtained from the baseline interview completed by all participants before randomization into the treatment and control groups for the intervention phase of the study.

RESULTS: The 2,676 male participants ranged in age from 18 to 70 with a mean age of 32 years (SD=8.8). Overall, 73.4% of male participants were Black; and 16.6% were Hispanic. One quarter of the sample reported unwanted/uninvited sexual activity before they were 13 year of age. Men abused as children did not differ significantly from their nonabused peers with respect to age, education, or living status. However, differences were noted among groups on race and sexual orientation. Men with a history of childhood sexual abuse were more likely to report unwanted sexual activity since age 13 as a result of verbal threats or physical abuse, and they were more likely to report unwanted sex in the past 90 days. Moreover, men sexually abused as children were more times as likely to buy sex, sell sex, report a history of STDs, report problems with alcohol, use cocaine, heroin or injection drugs, and use mental health services. The average number of unprotected acts during the past 90 days was higher for abused men as was the average number of partners, and the proportion of intercourse acts accompanied by drugs or alcohol.

CONCLUSIONS: Although the findings of this study are limited to men who were determined to be at high risk for contracting HIV through risky sexual practices, the results highlight the importance of childhood sexual abuse among men as a public health problem. Identifying men who have suffered abuse and providing early intervention is important in reducing any risk that they might have to adopt risky sexual practices. Because the percent of men in this sample reporting sexual abuse as a child was relatively high, screening for abuse among men seeking care in STD clinics could be the first step in identifying men and should be included as part of the sexual history interview.

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